

Peace-building In Islam

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN gives suggestions for maintaining inter-faith harmony

Today, the biggest problem for Muslims is not communal riots or the conspiracies of others. Rather, it is their not being able to understand what they should do in order to foil riots and to render conspiracies ineffectual. God has placed the solution to the problems of life in serious contemplation and realistic action. But this is precisely what Muslims today are farthest from. They are ready to splurge their wealth and expend their strength on almost everything, but when it comes to realistic methods of dealing with the question of inter-communal conflict, they suddenly seem to have neither the money nor the time. Their condition today is exactly the same as what the *Quran*, 7: 146-47, describes in the following words: 'I will turn away from My signs all those who are arrogant in the land without any right, so that even if they see all the signs they will not believe in them. If they see the right path, they shall not walk upon it: but if they see the path of error, they shall choose it for their path, because they have given the lie to Our signs and paid no heed to them. The actions of those who denied Our signs and the Meeting of the Hereafter will come to nothing — they shall be requited only, according to their deeds.'

When someone gets worked up, angry and emotional, he can only relate to superficial things. No serious thing will appeal to him. This is



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the case with Muslims today. No matter what obvious evidence you may give them in favour of realistic approaches and methods, it does not seem to enter their minds. Instead, they enthusiastically support and embrace causes and approaches that can only result in their own further destruction....

As a consequence of this mentality, Muslims either engage in escapist rhetoric or else talk in terms of confrontation and conflict. This is the case with almost every Muslim throughout the world today... But if we do not want to further waste our strength and resources, there is no option but for us to change this approach of ours and to develop an effective programme in the light of practical realities.

The first and foremost task to undertake to end inter-communal conflict is to make Muslims aware and educated, so that they get over their emotionalism and also so that they understand how to respond to different situations. Muslims donate vast sums of money to help Muslim victims of inter-community violence. In the light of the fact that very often such violence is triggered off by the actions of ignorant and unemployed people, a better way of spending this money is to educate Muslims and make them more aware and also to develop avenues for employment of unemployed Muslims....

Our pens and tongues must all devote themselves to promoting patience, realism and unity. The secret of the strength of any community is



that its members know how to think in a serious way, not in excelling in making a hue and cry about this and that.

Muslims everywhere must consider it their responsibility that whenever a fellow Muslim commits some mischief, they must make every effort to stop him. In this way, such incidents can easily be prevented from snowballing into inter-community violence. It is useless to create a furore in the aftermath of a riot. The wise approach is to focus one's efforts in resolving individual or personal conflicts and complaints before they degenerate into collective or inter-community violence. Finally, efforts must be made to focus Muslims in another direction — that of the work of calling people to God. Their enthusiasm for engaging in action needs to be redirected, from political agitation and internal conflicts to inviting people to God through peaceful activism.

If Muslims channelise their enthusiasm for action in this direction, most of their conflicts with others will cease. It is like when an unemployed man who has spent a long time fighting with other people suddenly gets a good job, he gives up his bad habits and focusses entirely on his new vocation. ■

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